UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/48/462
4 October 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-eighth session
Agenda item 109

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 3	3
II.	INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION	4 - 21	3
	A. Disability and major international conferences in the period 1993 to 1995	4 - 9	3
	B. International Conference of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities	10 - 11	4
	C. Inter-agency collaboration	12 - 15	5
	D. Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002	16	5
	E. Role of international non-governmental organizations	17 - 19	6
	F. Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities	20 - 21	6

93-53892 (E) 081093 151093

/...

CONTENTS (continued)

		Paragraphs	Page
III.	OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS	22 - 37	7
	A. Facilitating coordination at the national level .	22 - 24	7
	B. Presenting disability legislation	25	7
	C. Establishment of a database and collection of statistics	26 - 27	8
	D. Revision of the translations of the terms "impairment", "disability", "handicap" and "disabled person"	28	9
	E. International Day of Disabled Persons	29	9
	F. United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability . . .	30 - 32	9
	G. Towards a long-term strategy	33 - 34	10
	H. Panel of eminent persons	35 - 37	11
IV.	MONITORING OF THE MAJOR POLICY DOCUMENTS IN THE FIELD OF DISABILITY	38 - 41	11

I. INTRODUCTION

1. To highlight the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons in 1992, the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session devoted four plenary meetings to disability issues. The meetings served as a platform to reflect, to give Member States the opportunity to take stock of the work already accomplished, to identify the major challenges that lie ahead, and to reaffirm their commitment to policies for the full integration of persons with disabilities into society. The International Conference of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities, held at Montreal, Canada, on 8 and 9 October 1992, complemented the special plenary meetings.

2. During these meetings, Member States recognized the work achieved in the area of policy formulation within the United Nations system. Throughout the Decade, guidelines, manuals, programmes and plans had been drafted. The expectations of the Decade had not, however, been fully realized. The implementation of disability programmes had been hindered by a number of factors, including the absence of effective monitoring mechanisms. The major challenge of the post-Decade era would be to adopt activities with direct benefits to persons with disabilities.

3. Following this debate, the General Assembly adopted resolution 47/88 of 16 December 1992 entitled "Towards full integration of persons with disabilities into society: a continuing world programme of action". Reiterating the message it had given at mid-decade through its resolution 45/91, the Assembly, in paragraph 8 of the resolution, called for a shift of emphasis from awareness raising to action and requested a strengthening of the leadership role of the United Nations as a catalyst for change, as a standard-setting organization, as a forum for the exchange of views and as a promoter of technical cooperation. The Assembly then enumerated a number of measures to be taken or considered at the national and international levels.

II. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

A. Disability and major international conferences in the period 1993 to 1995

4. The General Assembly has encouraged the consideration of disability issues relevant to the subject-matter of major forthcoming international events.

5. With regard to the World Conference on Human Rights, held at Vienna in June 1993, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (Assembly resolution 217 A (III), annex) had laid the foundation for many subsequent declarations and resolutions concerning disabled persons, particularly the Declaration on Social Progress and Development (Assembly resolution 2542 (XXIV)), the Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons (Assembly resolution 2856 (XXVI)), and the Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons (Assembly resolution 3447 (XXX)). The World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (A/37/351/Add.1 and Corr.1, annex, sect. VIII, recommendation 1 (iv)) reaffirmed the principles contained in the Universal Declaration. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted at the

World Conference on Human Rights, gives special reference to the human rights of persons with disabilities and calls upon Member States to adopt the draft Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which will be before the Assembly at its current session.

6. Preparations for the International Year of the Family (1994) include the production of an explanatory leaflet on Rule No. 9 of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, regarding family life and personal integrity. The publication is scheduled for 1994.

7. The Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace will be held at Beijing in 1995. It is recognized that women with disabilities suffer from double prejudice - as women and as persons with disabilities. A regional Conference on Sexual Abuse and Domestic Violence of Disabled Women was organized by the Government of Austria and held in November 1992. Further efforts are being made to include disability issues in the preparatory process and in the agenda of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has proposed a regional meeting on the role of disabled women in the family.

8. The World Summit for Social Development will also be held in 1995. At its thirty-third session, the Commission for Social Development noted the interrelationships between the three core issues of the Summit: the enhancement of social integration, particularly of the more disadvantaged and marginalized groups; alleviation and reduction of poverty with emphasis on the situation of vulnerable groups; and expansion of productive employment (see Assembly resolution 47/92, para. 6). In selecting the issue of social integration, the General Assembly has reaffirmed the need for assistance to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, including disabled persons.

9. The International Conference on Population and Development, to be held at Cairo in 1994, will provide another opportunity for addressing pertinent issues on disability.

B. International Conference of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities

10. It will be recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 47/88, welcomed the initiative of the Government of Canada in convening the conference and the decision of the Conference to establish a Working Group of Ministers. The main objective of the Conference was to ensure that the activities of the Decade continued and that they received attention at the highest political level. The Working Group was mandated to define an ongoing mechanism that would facilitate collaboration at the ministerial level. The Ministers expressed the wish to tackle the implementation of the World Programme of Action more forcefully, more expeditiously and more effectively. They also expressed their desire to meet the challenges of translating the basic policy framework into real and meaningful benefits for disabled persons.

11. Since October 1992, two sessions of the Working Group have been held. The first, in January 1993 in Paris, established an international secretariat for the Conference at Montreal, Canada. The second session, held in April 1993 at

Montreal, established two committees on legal, financial, and operational issues.

C. Inter-agency collaboration

12. During the Decade, inter-agency meetings were held to facilitate the implementation of the World Programme of Action. The tenth Inter-Agency Meeting on the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons was held at Vienna from 7 to 10 December 1992. The need for increased collaboration, including with non-governmental organizations, was acknowledged. The advantages of a multi-sectoral approach to technical cooperation were stressed. As a result of a recent decision of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, Inter-Agency Meetings on the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons will be discontinued as a formal forum. Consultations will, however, be held among agencies and concerned organizations on an informal basis. The first inter-agency consultation is scheduled for early 1994; it is envisaged that regional meetings will be convened by United Nations regional commissions every other year.

13. Joint programming missions between the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) took place between 1990 and 1993 in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Benin, Chad and Guatemala. A growing emphasis will be given to the incorporation of a disability component into "social reconstruction" programmes undertaken within the United Nations system.

14. In the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Inter-Organizational Task Force on Disability-Related Concerns has been meeting since 1986. Composed of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations whose work relates to disability issues, its members collaborate through information exchange and networking.

15. The Assembly requested, in paragraph 8 (f) of its resolution 47/88, a review of the Human Development Index to include an evaluation of the way a society treats its disabled citizens as a factor of the quality of life in that society. Work has begun on indicators for the Index, including through an inter-agency consultation. The importance of accurate statistical data on disability is fully recognized.

D. Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002

16. At its forty-eighth session in April 1992, ESCAP adopted a resolution to proclaim the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, with a view to giving fresh impetus to the implementation of the World Programme of Action beyond 1992 and strengthening regional cooperation. The Meeting to Launch the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons was held at Beijing from 1 to 5 December 1992. The Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region and the Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons were adopted in ESCAP resolution 49/6.

E. Role of international non-governmental organizations

17. The process of achieving a society for all must involve as many of the social actors as possible. International non-governmental organizations have played a vital role in the promotion of the disability programme, particularly at the grass-roots level, and will continue to do so, notably in the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities once they are adopted. The expertise, knowledge, information and contacts held by international non-governmental organizations should be put to the best use by the United Nations disability programme in policy formulation, programme implementation and technical assistance to Member States. Beyond the Decade, the NGO Consultative Forum, with an expanded membership, will contribute to exchanges of information on policies and practical experiences.

18. The International Disability Foundation, a private initiative, was recently established at Geneva, with the aim of assisting non-governmental organizations to coordinate their activities through an International Disability Center and to provide liaison services to the United Nations and other international bodies.

19. Other initiatives in different regions should also have a positive impact on the situation of disabled persons. In the European Community, the Helios programme aims at comparing experiences and exchanging information and innovative integration measures. Handynet is a multinational, multilingual database involving 12 countries and 9 languages. The Horizon initiative aims particularly at introducing good practices into the less developed countries of the Community by involving proposals for joint projects from more than one member State. The European Conference of Ministers has established a Pan-European network of projects on independent living and equality with the aim of exchanging information on good practice on independent living across national frontiers. A significant strengthening of such development action is needed. International cooperation for development must be seen as an intrinsic element in efforts to improve the status of disabled persons in developing countries.

F. Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

20. The General Assembly, in paragraph 9 of its resolution 47/88, urged the Commission for Social Development to expedite the elaboration of the Standard Rules. At its thirty-third session, the Commission completed its work on this question and adopted a resolution recommending, through the Economic and Social Council, the adoption by the Assembly of the Standard Rules. These rules indicate the preconditions and target areas for equal participation, outline implementation measures, and propose a monitoring mechanism. There are 22 proposed rules.

21. In section IV, Monitoring mechanism, of the draft Standard Rules, it is indicated that a Special Rapporteur with relevant and extensive experience of disability, issues and international organizations should be appointed, if necessary, funded by extrabudgetary resources, for three years to monitor the implementation of the Standard Rules. Also, it is suggested that, should extrabudgetary resources be identified, one or more positions of Interregional

Adviser on the Standard Rules should be created to provide direct services to States. These questions will have to be discussed by the General Assembly in the context of its completion of the draft standard rules.

III. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS

A. Facilitating coordination at the national level

22. In order to achieve social integration, social institutions must adjust and society must change to accommodate the needs of all its members. Disability issues need to be incorporated in the mainstream development programmes of both national and international development agencies.

23. The integration process at the national level can be greatly assisted through the strengthening of national capacities and institutions. In paragraph 2 of its resolution 47/88, the General Assembly urged Governments to show their commitment to improving the situation of persons with disabilities, by, where appropriate, creating new or strengthening existing high-level national coordinating committees or other similar bodies in accordance with the Guidelines for the Establishment and Development of National Coordinating Committees on Disability or Similar Bodies (A/C.3/46/4, annex I).

24. The Secretariat, with the assistance of the Government of Finland, is preparing a manual on the integration of disability issues into national planning and development projects. Completion and field testing of the manual are planned in 1994. The Secretariat has also assisted Member States in the formulation of regional training seminars for strengthening national coordinating committees or similar bodies in five geographical regions, with a view to adapting the Guidelines for the Establishment and Development of National Coordinating Committees on Disability or Similar Bodies. Four regional training seminars - for Eastern European and Baltic States, for Latin American States, for the Commonwealth of Independent States, and for South Asian States - are scheduled in 1993 and 1994, two of which have incorporated legislative issues in their agenda. The training seminar for the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries was conducted in Nepal in May 1993. With funding assistance from the Government of Italy, six of the seven SAARC countries were represented. The seminar requested national governments to take immediate steps to form national coordinating committees on disability and related issues and also to establish a pan-SAARC regional body of national committees. An ad hoc committee has been formed under the convenorship of Nepal to coordinate efforts for the regional body. In addition, the Directory of National Coordinating Committees, originally compiled in 1991, is currently being updated.

B. Promoting disability legislation

25. Disability-specific legislation is not only a means of establishing and promoting the rights of disabled persons, but is also an important step in ensuring that those rights are enforced. An increasing interest in disability legislation has been witnessed over recent years, particularly in developing countries, while other more industrialized countries have enacted comprehensive

legislation. In an attempt to assist Member States in the development of appropriate legislation, the Secretariat is currently preparing a manual on disability legislation in developing countries, which is being co-financed by the Government of Sweden. The manual will offer guidelines for the drafting of legislation and provide model statutes. Special attention will be given to the legal protection of persons with disabilities at the local level. In addition, the Secretariat and Harvard University School of Law, Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States of America, have recently agreed to collaborate on the publication of an annual review of disability law and social policy for the purpose of providing a comprehensive survey of disability-related legal issues.

C. Establishment of a database and collection of statistics

26. A recent initiative of the Secretariat, receiving financial and in-kind support of several Governments, is the establishment of the Clearinghouse Data Base on Disability-Related Information (CLEAR). The Secretariat has begun utilizing the CLEAR system for handling information requests. A comprehensive questionnaire, produced for the collection of data, was initially distributed to the specialized agencies of the United Nations system as well as to major non-governmental organizations. The data obtained through this exercise will enhance the clearinghouse capability of the United Nations to serve as focal point on disability policies and programmes. The CLEAR software will be extended to support multiple thesauri, allowing CLEAR to translate subject-based queries for referral to other information services. Organizations that had been identified as CLEAR Access Points will receive a special copy of the software and regular data updates from the main CLEAR system. Access points will provide individuals with a convenient method for registering inquiries to the CLEAR information network. This method of access could be of particular importance in developing countries, where the cost of telephone calls, faxes or access to an on-line information network might be prohibitive.

27. In its resolution 47/88, the General Assembly requested the Secretariat to continue to collect statistical data about disability matters and to publish updated disability statistics. The International Disability Statistics Database (DISTAT, version 2) is being prepared by the Statistical Office of the United Nations for dissemination in 1993. DISTAT contains national disability statistics from censuses, household surveys and administrative registries, and presents data on 12 major socio-economic and demographic topics concerning disability. A technical manual on methods of collecting and analysing disability statistics is also under preparation, which will provide case-studies of national survey experience in disability data collection. In addition, a review of national approaches for disability data collection in population censuses and administrative records will be presented. The International Workshop on Development and Dissemination of Statistics on Persons with Disabilities, organized by the Secretariat and Statistics Canada, was held at Ottawa, Canada, from 13 to 16 October 1992. The Workshop considered the concerns of producers of disability statistics, including survey directors and data users in both government offices and research centres, regarding the need for comparability and quality of disability data. An expert group meeting on disability statistics is being planned to prepare international guidelines needed for improved methods of collection, international comparability and effectiveness of disability statistics.

D. Revision of the translations of the terms "impairment", "disability", "handicap" and "disabled person"

28. Work is progressing on the finalization of the translation of the above terms into the official United Nations languages. The international network to improve the international classification of impairment, disability and handicap (ICIDH) held its annual general meeting in November 1992 at Montreal. That meeting's deliberations complemented the work of the World Health Organization's committee charged with revising the ICIDH, which had its second meeting in March 1992 in the Netherlands. The World Health Assembly in the spring of 1993 had considered a report on the status of the revision, with emphasis on the international impact and numerous applications of the ICIDH. An inventory of difficulties had been made by WHO. The importance of environmental factors in the creation of handicaps was underlined. A review of the Chinese and Spanish versions of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons by the Governments of China and Spain, respectively, indicated the inappropriate translation of disability-related terminology. Accordingly, at their own initiative, these Governments have contributed revised versions of the World Programme of Action, for use by the international community.

E. International Day of Disabled Persons

29. The anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons falls on 3 December. To commemorate this occasion and to ensure the continued promotion of disability issues beyond the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, the General Assembly at the special plenary meetings of its forty-seventh session adopted resolution 47/3 proclaiming 3 December of each year as the International Day of Disabled Persons. In its resolution 1993/18, the Economic and Social Council recommended to the General Assembly at its current session the adoption of a draft resolution on the International Day.

F. United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability

30. In its resolution 46/96 of 16 December 1991, the General Assembly requested the Economic and Social Council at its next session to give its views on the continuation of the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and to submit its recommendations to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session. In its decision 1992/276 of 30 July 1992, the Council recommended to the Assembly the continuation of the Fund beyond the Decade with new terms of reference and under the new name United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability. In its resolution 47/88, the Assembly decided to continue the Fund and encouraged the Secretary-General to explore diversified funding arrangements to support and strengthen the Fund involving not only Member States, but also the private sector, with due regard to the need for greater transparency in the management of the Fund.

31. Accordingly, the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, under its old name and mandate, ceased to exist on 31 December 1992. From 1980 to 1992, the Fund had provided more than $3.2 million in co-financing grants to 187 disability-related projects. The majority of projects supported

training activities for disabled persons in developing countries, closely followed by support to technical exchange programmes, support to organizations of and for disabled persons and data collection and applied research. The Fund received contributions from 45 Member States and a number of private and non-governmental organizations. Fund resources have been augmented by project-specific co-financing grants - currently involving 21 projects - by the Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Programmes (AGFUND).

32. The United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability came into operation on 1 January 1993. It will be used to strengthen technical cooperation activities through the co-financing of field-based technical cooperation projects, with special emphasis on least developed countries and especially disadvantaged groups. The Secretariat has taken steps to publish a new information leaflet on the Fund and a catalogue of projects available for funding. The information leaflet will contain an overview of past activities and identify successful projects and priority areas for future activities. The catalogue of projects requiring co-financing partners will be published at regular intervals and will contain project proposals which cannot be fully funded by the Fund.

G. Towards a long-term strategy

33. The political commitment evidenced at the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and the consequent initiatives that emerged have emphasized the need for a strategy to coordinate their effective implementation. Efforts to develop such a strategy evolved from the Expert Group Meeting on Alternative Ways to Mark the End of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, held at Jarvenpää, Finland, in May 1990 (see A/45/470). It was stressed that a strategy should reflect the changing economic and social situation and political reality, and that due account should be taken of the major international concerns such as poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, debt crisis, environmental pollution, armed conflicts and their implications on disabled persons. The strategy should be based on the priority themes of equalization of opportunities, full recognition of the rights of disabled persons and independent living, and the goal of self-advocacy and self-determination. The meeting also noted that any strategy would be best served by the establishment of permanent structures and mechanisms, in collaboration with organizations of people who are disabled, to continuously advance and promote the rights of persons who are disabled.

34. Subsequently, the General Assembly in resolution 46/96 and the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1991/9 recommended that a meeting of experts be held with the objective of drawing up a long-term strategy to implement the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons to the Year 2000 and Beyond, and that the meeting be held in conjunction with Independence '92 - an international symposium of organizations of disabled persons. The Meeting was held in Vancouver, Canada in April 1992 and the resulting report (E/CN.5/1993/4) was submitted to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-third session in February 1993. In its resolution 1993/20, the Council called for the views of Member States on the subject. At the time of reporting, few replies have been received. The General Assembly will be informed of the progress made by the Secretariat in preparing a draft long-term strategy.

H. Panel of eminent persons

35. In paragraph 8 (c) of its resolution 47/88, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to consider the creation of a panel of eminent persons, including persons with disabilities, to advise the Secretary-General on disability matters. This request was made by the Assembly in the context of moving the programme on disability from awareness raising to action and giving higher priority and visibility to disability issues within the work programme of the United Nations system.

36. International non-governmental organizations have expressed the view that the panel should refer to the human rights of disabled persons, social development, United Nations policy on disability, and employment of disabled persons within the United Nations system. They noted that developing countries should be represented on the panel, and that it should also consist of representatives of organizations of disabled persons. Informal consultations with some Governments suggest that the panel should consist of persons of high status committed to the protection and promotion of human rights, development cooperation and international solidarity.

37. At this stage, consultations on the need for such a panel and on possible modalities of its functioning are still being pursued in the context of the follow-up of the mandates given by the General Assembly on matters related to social development.

IV. MONITORING OF THE MAJOR POLICY DOCUMENTS IN THE FIELD OF DISABILITY

38. The United Nations disability programme has as its guiding documents the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and, if adopted, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Disabled Persons. These documents may be complemented by a long-term strategy on the implementation of the World Programme of Action. Together, these documents provide the substantive basis of the future United Nations disability programme.

39. The review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action is carried out in five-year-cycles, with the first review undertaken in 1987 and the second review in 1992. A third monitoring exercise would normally be scheduled for 1997 and the fourth for 2002. Reports to the General Assembly will be submitted on a biennial basis.

40. Should a Special Rapporteur be appointed to monitor the implementation of the Standard Rules, a monitoring mechanism would focus on a limited number of specific rules for in-depth evaluation. The Special Rapporteur would then prepare monitoring reports for submission to the Commission for Social Development.

41. There is a need for a review of these various monitoring and reporting procedures. The Secretariat might make proposals in this regard.